

SAFEGUARD: PRO AND CON

The arguments pro and con the ABM were summarized last week in the report of the Senate Armed Services Committee, which voted, 10-7, to recommend expenditure of \$345.5 million to start deployment of the Administration's \$11 billion Safeguard system. Here are the key majority and minority views:

THE MAJORITY REPORT

1. The U.S. bargaining position in arms limitation talks with the Russians would be improved. "The President believes that the backing of the Congress on his Safeguard program would strengthen his hand in the forthcoming negotiations with the Soviet Union on the limitation of offensive and defensive nuclear systems. If we unilaterally abandon all deployment of our ABM's, what incentive do we give the Soviets to negotiate with us a limit or a reduction in their ABM deployment? If American negotiators are confronted with a situation where the Soviet negotiators believe time is running on the Soviet side, our negotiators would be up against very adverse odds."

2. Advances in Soviet weaponry threaten to alter the balance of nuclear deterrence between the superpowers. "We have solid hard intelligence information that—

"(1) The Soviet Union has either in operation or under construction at least 230 SS-9 ICBM's. If the Soviets continue to build additional missiles at the same rate as in the past several years, by the mid-1970s they will be in a position to threaten the effectiveness of our Minuteman forces. Based on past accomplishments and their potential, it is assumed that each missile will be able to contain three separate warheads;

"(2) The Soviets are building a Polaris-type submarine that could in the mid-1970s threaten the system of ground alert B-52 bomber forces; and

"(3) Russia also has under way a large program of nuclear attack submarines which could in the 1970s become a threat to our Polaris/Poseidon force. Obviously we cannot assume that our Polaris system will be the first weapon in history to remain invulnerable.

"The hard truth is that by the mid-1970s unless we continue to make appropriate decisions [on] threats to our Minuteman and bomber retaliatory forces, and to our Polaris forces, the second-strike capability of a large proportion of our strategic deterrent forces will be in doubt."

3. The 1970 phase of Safeguard's deployment is limited, and subsequent phases will be subject to annual Congressional review, during which the ABM system could be altered or abandoned if the Soviet-American arms limitation talks are successful. "The funds in this bill only represent a partial funding of the Phase 1

program for the sites to be located at Grand Forks, N.D., and Malmstrom, Mont. Except for \$600,000 there are no funds for hardware for the operational Sprint and Spartan missiles. In other words, there are no operational missile funds for the Phase 1 sites. These must be funded in future years . . .

"Because of the necessity for both authorization and appropriation, the Congress has complete control of all the Safeguard program beyond fiscal year 1970. Each year the Congress will have the opportunity to review intelligence data and the threat to our forces. After such review the Congress can then be in a position to assess whether or not under all the circumstances the Safeguard system [should] be continued."

4. Construction of Safeguard must begin now to avoid production delays later. "If the measured progress proposed for fiscal year 1970 is not approved—that is, if production is delayed by one year—the initial operational capability now scheduled for 1974 will be delayed for two years until 1976 due to loss of time caused by the breakdown in production momentum and the time consumed in rebuilding production lines."

5. Scientists disagree over whether the Safeguard system will work, but the benefit of the doubt should be given to those who say it will. "Reputable scientists have testified that the system will not operate

effectively due to its complexity, while other scientists have testified that despite [its] complex nature . . . the technical problems can be resolved . . .

"The testing and design work on both the missile, the radar components, and the computers so far have not indicated that there are insuperable technological problems confronting the Safeguard system. It is prudent that any doubt on this question be resolved in favor of confidence in the system."

6. Alternative methods of protecting the U.S. nuclear deterrent would probably either escalate the arms race or fail to offer as effective a shield as the ABM. "While there may be possible alternatives to the construction of the Safeguard system, such as adding to our offensive forces or superhardening the present Minuteman sites, the prudent course is not to abandon the Safeguard system at this time and proceed on other alternatives. To proceed with additional offensive forces would probably provide a real threat in the escalation of the arms race. Moreover, there is some doubt as to whether in the long run time and funds would be saved with this alternative. There is a program at the present time for development work in superhardening the missile silos. It is not believed, however, that this would be a substitute for an [ABM] system since, with sufficient accuracy, even hardened silos are vulnerable."

"It is believed that the Safeguard system will provide the Minuteman with sufficient protection to make it a creditable deterrent. Admittedly, any system can be saturated. If circumstances change in the years ahead indicating this probability to the anti-ballistic-missile system, then other alternatives must be considered either in the form of additional ABM's and radars or additional offensive missiles or some other course of action."

THE MINORITY REPORT

1. The extreme complexity of the Safeguard system raises serious doubts that it will work. "Safeguard is the most complicated technological development ever planned for operation by man. The system consists of three major component parts: (1) missiles, (2) radars and (3) computers.

"Although we have had a long and therefore disturbing series of failures in missile testing, including another Minuteman failure only last week, there is no reason to conclude that the two Safeguard missiles, the Spartan and the Sprint, will not work. But there is reason to doubt that the long-range radar (PAR) and the short-range radar (MSR), parts of which have not been built let alone tested, will operate successfully together in that almost instantaneous manner which would be necessary in case of sudden attack; and there is even more reason to doubt that the computer, which has neither been built nor tested, and which is admittedly far more complicated than any computer ever yet



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attempted, will operate properly when called upon to do so.

"Finally, it is logical to consider whether, even if these three separate components would operate properly as separate units, would they so operate when combined. For obvious reasons, the testing of any joint operation has not been possible."

2. The Safeguard system itself is distinctly vulnerable to nuclear attack. "Because the resistance strength (pounds per square inch) of the MSR radar is less than 10 per cent of the strength of the missile site in its present conformation, that radar is very vulnerable even to the less lethal, less accurate Soviet SS-11 missile, of which the Soviets have hundreds more than they have SS-9s.

"Because the MSR radar is designed to guide both Safeguard missiles [Spartan and Sprint] to their targets, if it is knocked out the . . . system would be blinded and therefore worthless."

3. Even if Safeguard works perfectly, the Russians could easily overwhelm it by stepping up their offensive missiles. "The magnitude of the asserted threat has been declassified, but the Defense Department has consistently refused to release classified information presented the committee which to us [proves] conclusively that a small increase in Soviet SS-9 missile production would eliminate any significant protection by this system even if it worked perfectly.

"In this connection, one of the universally respected experts in this field, Dr. Wolfgang Panofsky, in an address last month stated:

"If the threat to Minuteman grows at the rate projected by the Defense Department, and if Minuteman became vulnerable at a certain time several years hence, then if the Safeguard system were installed and functioned perfectly, then the Minuteman would be just as vulner-

able as before only a few months later . . .

"It would . . . appear clear that if we proceed with this system, the Soviet Union will respond by increasing its offensive strength so as to negate any possible advantage which might be derived from said Safeguard deployment. The result could only be a further escalation of the arms race."

4. The United States has limited resources and a host of alternative needs for the billions of dollars proposed to be spent on a military system of doubtful effectiveness. "Because of our domestic problems and our foreign commitments, we must establish some order of priorities with respect to the use of our resources.

"Another word for priorities is values.

"The American people desire and demand an adequate defense; but it would seem pertinent to recall that whereas this government is currently requesting \$44 for the education of each American boy and girl, at the same time they are requesting \$20,400 in ammunition for each man we are fighting against in Vietnam—North Vietnamese, Viet Cong regulars and Viet Cong guerrillas . . .

"In summary, despite the heavy demands on our limited resources—demands incident to poverty, health, education, environment, and foreign commitments—if we believed that the Safeguard system would contribute in any substantial fashion to the security of the United States, we would recommend its deployment. We do not so believe, however.

"We do believe that any primary defense against the threat of a nuclear attack lies in our deterrent capacity. In this connection, we believe that with our Polaris fleet, our land-based ICBM's, our strategic bombers, and the thousands of additional nuclear warheads we have at sea and abroad, if we were attacked we could destroy the Soviet Union some 50 times over."